TRANSLATING CULTURE-BOUND PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES IN UZBEK–ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Abstract: This paper approaches phraseological units from the standpoint of translation studies. It investigates how idioms that carry national-cultural meaning can be rendered between Uzbek and English, classifies the main translation strategies, and discusses the factors that determine the choice of a strategy in practice.

Keywords: idiom, culture-bound expression, translation strategy, equivalence, loss and compensation.

Introduction

Phraseological units are a persistent difficulty in translation because their meaning is rarely the sum of their parts and is closely tied to the culture that produced them. A literal rendering often distorts the meaning or produces an unnatural, even absurd, effect in the target language. For translators working between Uzbek and English, two languages with very different historical, religious and everyday backgrounds, the problem is especially acute. Studying how such units are translated therefore has both theoretical and practical value.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to determine the most effective ways of translating culture-bound phraseological units between Uzbek and English. The objectives are:

1) to define culture-bound phraseological units and the problems they pose for translation;

2) to describe the principal translation strategies and the conditions under which each is appropriate;

3) to analyse what is gained and lost in translation, and how losses can be compensated.

Methodology

The research uses descriptive and comparative-contrastive analysis, translation analysis of source and target texts, and contextual interpretation. The theoretical basis draws on the approaches of Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), Nida (1964), Newmark (1988) and Baker (1992), as well as Uzbek

phraseological scholarship, notably Rahmatullayev (1978).

Main findings

• Equivalent idiom. Where both languages have a unit with the same meaning and similar imagery, it is the preferred option. An example is qo‘li ochiq and open-handed. Such full matches are relatively rare.

• Idiom with different imagery. Often the meaning is shared but the image is not. Uzbek ko‘zi to‘rt bo‘lmoq, meaning to wait anxiously, corresponds in function to English to wait with bated breath. This strategy keeps naturalness but replaces the original cultural image.

• Paraphrase. When no idiomatic counterpart exists, the meaning is conveyed in ordinary words. This preserves sense and avoids confusion, but the figurative colour and the cultural flavour are lost, as when the English kick the bucket is rendered neutrally as to pass away.

• Literal translation with explanation. For units with strong national-cultural content, such as non-tuz, a literal rendering supported by a brief note or context lets the reader grasp both the image and the meaning. This suits literary and academic texts, but is cumbersome in subtitles or speech.

• Omission. A unit may be dropped when it is redundant or when its rendering would disrupt the text. This is a last resort and should be justified by the context.

• Factors affecting the choice. The decision depends on text type, target audience, the function of the idiom in the passage, and the translator’s aim, whether to bring the reader closer to the source culture or to adapt the text to the reader’s own.

Conclusion

Translating culture-bound phraseological units requires more than linguistic knowledge: it demands cultural competence and an awareness of the function the unit performs in context. No single strategy is universally correct, and loss at the level of imagery is often unavoidable, but it can be reduced through compensation and careful choice of method. The results may be used in translator training, in the preparation of bilingual phraseological dictionaries and in teaching translation between Uzbek and English.

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